



# Special Edition

## 2006 Special Education Conference

### Informational Resources

•SpEd Website  
[www.state.tn.us/education/speced](http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced)

•SpEd Tollfree Phone  
 1-888-212-3162

•SpEd Hearing Impaired Line  
 615-741-2237

•TN Early Intervention  
 1-800-852-7157

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This years Annual Special Education Conference, held March 8, 9 and 10 at the Nashville Airport Marriott, was a huge success.

Due to Nationally recognized speakers, TASL credits being offered and the wide range and variety of sessions, the attendance has nearly doubled over the last 4 years. This year over 1100 special educators from across the state and even a few from across the country enjoyed 3 days of information and networking provided, as always, at no cost.

Beginning with the Opening Session which included a well received Keynote address by Dr. Leonard C. Burrello as well as a welcome from Assistant Commissioner of Special Education, Joseph Fisher and

Greetings from Commissioner of Education, Lana Seivers, the entire three day event was packed with information, ideas, tips as well as conversation, fun and food.

If you missed the conference this year, be sure to make your reservations early for next year's event which has already been scheduled for February 28—March 2, 2007 once again at the Nashville Airport Marriott. For more information feel free to contact Donna Parker, Director of Staff Development at 615/532-6194 or [Donna.Parker@state.tn.us](mailto:Donna.Parker@state.tn.us).

Also, for a complete interactive list of sessions including handouts from this years Special Education Conference please visit the



Commissioner of Education Lana Seivers addressing assembly at the opening session of this year's Special Education Conference.

Special Education Website  
[www.state.tn.us/education/speced](http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced).

See inside for more information and pictures from this year's conference.

## Closing the Achievement Gap for TN Students

As reported in the Dept. of Ed. media release, March 6, 2006, Tennessee is one of five states recently recognized by U.S. Secretary of Ed., Margaret Spellings for "closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities. The number of K-8 students with special needs meeting academic standards in reading/language arts jumped 27% from 54% to 69% in 2004-05."

"I am proud to represent a state

that has made raising the academic success of students who receive special education services a priority," Ed. Commissioner Lana Seivers said. The Dept. is pleased with the interventions, supports and staff development provided by local systems to ensure the progress of students with disabilities in the general curriculum. Inclusion of students with disabilities has made a significant difference in their academic achievement.

The Dept. has provided grants to LEA's designed specifically to "enhance the skills and achievement level of students with disabilities." This support has allowed the state "to create an information system for students receiving SpEd services, improve literacy skills of struggling readers and eliminate disproportional representation of minorities in special education."

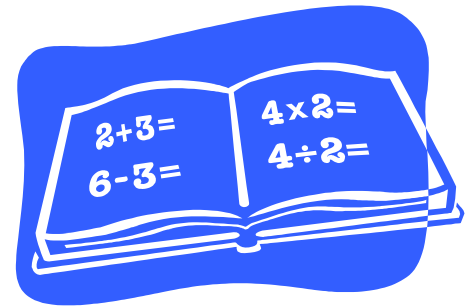
## Teacher Quality Academics in Math/Lang Arts

Teaching and Learning is funding **Teacher Quality Academics** at several locations across the state in K-4 and 5-8 Mathematics, Language Arts and 5-8 in Science. Special Education teachers and Vocational Teachers may be interested in attending.

Special Education teachers are constantly working with struggling students to master the basic skills of the curriculum. The basic skills a student needs for Math, Science and Language Arts are established by the end of the 8th grade curriculum. However, the 5-8 academic curriculum is also appropriate for many of the Math/Science related courses offered in the high school curriculum and the Language Arts course addresses skills needed for adolescent reading instruction in high school. The academies are five days, with teachers receiving research-based/standards-based instruction using out-

standing materials. In mathematics, teachers receive free the NCTM Navigation books and the ETA manipulatives appropriate to their grade levels. Instruction follows the Tennessee Blueprint for Learning. Teachers receive 45 points toward license renewal and/or the HOUSSSE matrix for HQ status. Graduate college credit is also available for them to purchase if they want plus hours above their masters for pay increments. It is a grand opportunity for teachers, truly a "Cadillac" program. Share this information with your teachers. The information was sent out on the principals list serve. However, sometimes Vocational and Special Education teachers get left out of the mix although they teach the application of these academic skills. They may also want or need the graduate credit, HQ points or renewal points.

For registration information please see: [www.tntqacademies.com](http://www.tntqacademies.com) < <http://www.tntqacademies.com/> >



## 2006 Special Education Conference Closing Session/Recognition Awards



Above: Assistant Commissioner Joseph Fisher and Ann Hampton present Recognition Award to Johnson County Representatives.

Before concluding this year's Special Education Conference, Assistant Commissioner Fisher wanted to recognize and honor those LEA's and/or schools which have shown exemplary progress in their Special Education Programs.

In order to choose the most deserving LEA's, a real emphasis was placed on Inclusion and how well the system promoted placing children into the general curricu-

lum to really make a difference.

Awardees:

**Johnson County, Roane Creek Elem. Preschool**—For all inclusive Headstart, State Preschool and SpEd Preschool.

**Sevier County Schools**—For programs including SpEd and Regular Ed. Teachers working together for the greater success of all students.

**Monroe County, Tellico Plains Elementary**—most successful use of State Inclusion Grant Funds.

**Hamilton County, Soddy Daisy High School**—For exceptional growth and results from their Work Based Learning Program

**Sumner County**—For Excellent job with Inclusion for many years.

**Tipton County**—Great job with inclusion beginning with preschool program.

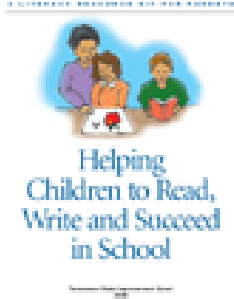


Above: TN School for the Blind Chorus Performs at Special Education Conference Reception.

Below: Magic For Special Education/Court Jesters Magic Troops Perform at Special Education Conference Reception.



## SIG Family Literacy Toolkit



On February 20, 2006, State Improvement Grant Family and School Consultants presented their newly-developed Family Literacy Toolkit for the first time at Collinwood Elementary School in Wayne County. Of Collinwood's approximate 300 students, about a third

of the families were represented at the training by at least one parent. The toolkits were a big hit with parents indicating they left with a great deal more knowledge about how to help their children develop literacy skills. Collinwood's literacy leader worked with grant consultants by organizing teachers to do fun activities with the children.

SIG consultants continue to roll out the Toolkits in both preschools and elementary schools across the state. The Toolkits, based on scientific literature and scientifically-reviewed, are given to families who attend. They provide games,

activities and information about how children learn to read, how to work with teachers and school personnel and how to support their child's literacy development. The toolkit manual may be found on the web at

<http://sig.cls.utk.edu/pdf/SIG20Resource20Kit.pdf> or for more information on the initiative contact Kathy Strunk, State Improvement Grant Coordinator at 615/532-1659 or at [Kathy.Strunk@state.tn.us](mailto:Kathy.Strunk@state.tn.us)

## First 20 Special Education Licensure Program Completers Graduate

Please join Dr. James G. Wingate, President, the LeMoyné-Owen College Family and the Division of Special Education as we congratulate the Special Education graduates of 2005-2006.

The Special Education Program on May 6, 2006 will graduate 20 program completers with licensure in Modified Programs, K-12. These Teacher Candidates will be entering the Memphis City, Shelby County, and surrounding school districts during the fall opening session. The program is under the direction of Dr. Ralph Calhoun, Assistant Professor/Coordinator of Special Education.

## SIG RtI Online Modules/Bi-Annual Conference

The State Improvement Grant has greatly enjoyed collaboration with the Vanderbilt Iris Center in the development of four online modules on Response to Intervention (RtI). The modules provide professional development opportunities not only for Tennessee Educators but for the entire nation.

Also, SIG held its Bi-Annual Conference on March 21-23, 2006, at the Preston Hotel in Nashville, with a focus on "Scaling-Up". The staff and partners, which make up a management team and three workgroups: 1) School Service Providers, 2) Family Service Providers, and 3) Higher Education Consultants, have worked tirelessly in several schools across the state to advance the literacy skills of Tennessee students

and improve family involvement in schools. The grant team is now looking at ways to reach more students and standardize materials and activities for sustainability. Richard Lewis, Associate Director of MSRRRC, and Brent Garrett, SIG Evaluation Consultant, gave valuable input and guidance toward reaching this goal.

**"RtI, more than anything else, is about good teaching. Good teaching leads to improved student learning and *that* is exactly what the SIG proposes to do!"**

**-Kathy Strunk  
SIG Coordinator**

## Fond Farewell to Brenda Bledsoe, Part C Director

For the last ten years, Brenda Bledsoe has worked diligently in her position as Part C and Early Childhood Director for the Department. But much more than that Brenda went beyond the call of duty and was strongly devoted to all of TN's Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities.

After graduation from UT Martin, Brenda began her career as a SpEd preschool teacher before coming on-board with the Division's

Early Childhood Program.

Brenda guided TEIS according to IDEA Law and began a Service Guideline Committee to reinforce the developmental aspects of TEIS—bringing together professionals in TN concerning the developmental needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities, as well as having a strong role in the development of our State Improvement Grant (SIG).

During her tenure she developed and lead the SpEd

Office of Early Childhood team which included Jamie Kilpatrick as the West TN Consultant as well as the TN Early Intervention Data System (TEIDS) Director. Mr. Kilpatrick will be taking Brenda's place as Early Childhood Director.

*Below: Brenda Bledsoe with Assistant Commissioner Joseph Fisher on her final day with the Division.*



# In Memory of Janie King

This past April, due to tragic storms, the Department of Education as well as the State of Tennessee lost a valuable asset.

Janie King served as the Family Involvement Consultant in West Tennessee for the Division of Special Education. In that role she provided training for school staff and parents on the importance of family involvement, helped parents understand their roles in a child's education, and helped teachers feel prepared to work effectively with parents.

Janie had specialty training on the issues surrounding the impact of poverty and she held certification in poverty awareness training. She

began her career as an elementary teacher and earned a Master's degree in Special Education and Education



Leadership. Her expertise was an important part of the State Improvement Grant

management team. In that role, her knowledge in the areas of literacy issues, reading and family involvement were utilized on the State level to help children and families.

Because of her commitment to literacy skills, the Department collected \$718 which was donated to The Governor's Reading Initiative in Janie's name.

The positive impact of Janie's career was State-wide and the loss of her energy, enthusiasm and friendship will be felt for a long time.

## TCAP-Alt Assessment Changes

The 2005-2006 school year has brought many changes to the TCAP-Alt Assessments. August 9, 2005 the State received further guidance from the USDOE which required us to completely revamp out TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment (PA). The revisions were completed in September and State wide training was conducted through mid October. Immediately following State wide training, we began working on a contract that would allow a vendor to score our Portfolio Assessments for the first time. Previously, each school system scored their own portfolios and reported those to the State. A contract was awarded in May, and scoring procedures are underway. Having a vendor score the portfolios provides a great relief to many systems, making it possible for teachers to have more time in their classrooms with the students rather than scoring. The next big project on the horizon is development of a new 2% Assessment which we hope to have in place next school year. We are awaiting final guidance from the USDOE, which is expected in August, in order to begin a new contract for this additional assessment.



## Questions/Comments/Contributions?

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